

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEHRAN 0241

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TAGS: SHUM, MASS, IR
SUBJ: HUMAN RIGHTS: SECOND DISCUSSION WITH MFA

REF: 76 TEHRAN 12714

SUMMARY: IN SECOND CONVERSATION TO DATE ON SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS, MFA OFFICIAL MADE A NOT VERY VEILED THREAT THAT GOI MIGHT INSPIRE IRANIAN PRESS CRITICISM OF U.S. ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATED QUESTIONS IF USG DOES NOT PREVAIL ON CONGRESSIONAL AND OTHER CRITICS OF IRAN TO STOP ATTACKING GOI. ADCM AGREED TO REPORT THIS POSITION BUT EXPRESSED IMMEDIATE PERSONAL REACTION THAT SUCH A MOVE, IF SERIOUSLY UNDERTAKEN, WOULD BE DOING HARM TO RELATIONS BETWEEN FRIENDS RATHER THAN HURTING IRAN'S CRITICS. MFA OFFICIAL DID NOT CONTEST OUR REACTION BUT WAS DETERMINED TO PUSH FOR MORE ACTIVE USG DEFENSE OF IRAN. HE THOUGHT ARTICLES SUCH AS RECENT WOODWARD EXPOSE IN WASHINGTON POST SHOULD NOT GO UNANSWERED BY USG. ADCM REPEATED THAT CRITICISM IS COMING FROM ONLY A MINORITY OF U.S. SOURCES AND, WHILE IMPORTANT, OUGHT NOT BE EXAGGERATED TO POINT THAT IT CAUSED AN OVER-REACTION WHICH WOULD DAMAGE U.S.-IRANIAN FRIENDSHIP. EMBASSY COMMENTS BY SEPTTEL. END SUMMARY.

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1. MFA FOURTH POLITICAL (AMERICAN) DEPARTMENT HEAD HATEF INVITED ACTING DCM (POLCOUNS) TO CALL JANUARY 9. HATEF DELIVERED REACTION OF HIGHER GOI LEVELS TO DISCUSSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND RELATED SUBJECTS WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE DECEMBER 21 (REFTTEL). HATEF HAD AN ASSISTANT TAKING CAREFUL NOTES AND INDICATED FIRST

PART OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS ON INSTRUCTIONS.

2. HE SAID HIGHER LEVELS OF GOI CONSIDER FRASER HEARINGS AS A "SET UP" MEANT TO EMBARRASS THE SHAH AND HIS GOVERNMENT. WITNESSES SUCH AS BARAHENI ARE GIVEN CREDENCE IN SAME BREATH AS THE SHAH, PRIME MINISTER HOVEYDA, OR OTHER HIGH OFFICIALS. THIS IS INTOLERABLE TO IRANIANS. IRANIANS HAVE THE TRADITION OF HONORING ONE'S FATHER VERY HIGHLY. THEY CONSIDER THEIR KING THEIR FATHER AND HONOR HIM ACCORDINGLY.

3. PEOPLE HIGH IN GOI BELIEVE 95 PERCENT OF THE ARTICLES WRITTEN ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN ARE BASELESS, HATEF CONTINUED. MANY ARTICLES RELY ON TESTIMONY OF PEOPLE SUCH AS BARAHENI, WHO ADMITS HE WAS HAPPIEST IN THE ONE YEAR HE LIVED UNDER A COMMUNIST REGIME IN AZERBAIJAN AND WHO SUPPORTS AZERBAIJANI SEPARATISM. SUCH ARTICLES DO NOT HELP U.S.-IRANIAN FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING. IF USG CANNOT COPE WITH GROUPS ATTACKING IRANIANS THIS WAY, IF THIS IS MANIFESTATION OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS, THEN IRANIAN PRESS CAN MANIFEST ITS "FREEDOM" TOO. IRANIAN PRESS CAN CRITICIZE HUMAN RIGHTS "AND SUCH MATTERS" IN AMERICA. SUCH INFORMATION DOES NOT APPEAR IN THE IRANIAN PRESS AT PRESENT BECAUSE GOI PREVENTS IT. ITS APPEARANCE WOULD NOT HELP U.S. IMAGE IN IRAN.

4. AT THIS POINT HATEF NOTED ALL HE HAD BEEN SAYING WAS ON OFFICIAL INSTRUCTIONS. BEFORE PROCEEDING TO FURTHER DISCUSSION ADCM NOTED HE WOULD, OF COURSE, REPORT THIS CONFIDENTIAL

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POSITION IN FULL BUT WISHED REGISTER HIS OWN IMMEDIATE, PERSONAL REACTION THAT SITUATIONS IN U.S. AND IRAN ARE DIFFERENT, AND ANY ACTION SUCH AS THAT THREATENED WOULD NOT MEET THE PROBLEM PRESENTED BY CRITICISM FROM U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN SOURCES. IT WOULD SIMPLY EXACERBATE RELATIONSBETWEEN GOI AND USG, WHO ARE FRIENDS TRYING TO WORK ON THE PROBLEM TOGETHER.

5. ADCM THEN ASKED WHAT GROUPS HATEF WAS TALKING ABOUT. IT SOON BECAME CLEAR THAT PICTURE WAS SOMEWHAT FUZZY IN HATEF'S MIND BUT GENERALLY INCLUDED "THE CONGRESS" AND THE PRESS. HE REPEATEDLY PUSHED FOR MORE EFFECTIVE EFFORTS ON THE PART OF THE U.S. EXECUTIVE BRANCH TO BRING CRITICISM TO A HALT BY GETTING ACROSS AN IMAGE OF GOI AS BOTH A FRIENDLY AND AN INTELLIGENT GOVERNMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, RECENT WOODWARD ARTICLE IN WASHINGTON POST CREATED AN IMPRESSION THAT U.S. DEFENSE DEPT. HAS WRITTEN OFF IRANIANS AS HOPELESS DOLTS AND PAWNED OFF WORTHLESS EQUIPMENT ON THEM. IF DOD DISAGREES WITH THIS IMPRESSION, IT SHOULD

SAY SO PUBLICLY AND VOCIFEROUSLY TO IRAN'S CRITICS.

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6. ADCM SAID HE ACCEPTED THE PROPOSITION THAT MORE THOUGHT COULD BE GIVEN TO WAYS IN WHICH EMBASSY AND WASHINGTON AGENCIES MIGHT HELP INFLUENCE SOME AMERICAN CRITICS WITH THEIR OWN MORE POSITIVE UNDERSTANDING OF THE SITUATION. IRAN DOES NOT BENEFIT BY BEING ASSOCIATED IN CONGRESS OR U.S. MEDIA WITH SOME OTHER COUNTRIES BEING CRITICIZED FOR VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS. HOWEVER, IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT GOI RECOGNIZE NEED TO THINK HARDER ABOUT WAYS TO PRESENT ITS OWN IMAGE IN THE MANY CONTACTS IRAN HAS BEGUN TO HAVE WITH AMERICANS DIRECTLY, NOT PASSING THROUGH EMBASSY OR OTHER USG CHANNELS. FOR EXAMPLE, U.S. CITIZENS WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN VERY AWARE OF IRAN'S EXISTENCE A FEW YEARS AGO ARE NOW MORE AWARE DUE TO THE SHEER SIZE OF MUTUAL RELATIONS, INCLUDING SUCH THINGS AS LARGE SALES OF U.S. WEAPONS AND MANY AMERICANS FROM ALL PARTS OF THE U.S. GOING TO WORK IN IRAN AND WRITING HOME DESCRIBING THEIR EXPERIENCES.

7. HATEF BROUGH UP RECENT CRITICISMS OF ARMS SALES TO IRAN. HIS MAJESTY THE SHAH HAS POINTED OUT IRAN DOES NOT HAVE THE NUMBER OF WEAPONS COUNTRIES SUCH AS WEST GERMANY HAVE. WHY IS IRAN CRITICIZED AND NOT GERMANY? WOULD CONQUEST OF IRAN BY THE SOVIET UNION MEAN SO LITTLE
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TO USG? IT IS, AFTER ALL, UP TO IRAN TO JUDGE HOW MANY WEAPONS IT NEEDS TO PROTECT ITSELF. IRAN CANNOT COUNT ON U.S. INTERVENTION TO PROTECT IT AGAINST SOVIET AGGRESSION. ADCM REPLIED THAT THIS WAS GOOD EXAMPLE OF CHANGING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN USG AND IRAN. JUST AS MUTUAL IMAGES BETWEEN U.S. AND WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES SUCH AS BRITAIN, FRANCE, OR GERMANY ARE CREATED FROM MULTIPLICITY OF CONTACTS GOING WELL BEYOND GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, SO IRAN-U.S. RELATIONSHIP IS BEGINNING TO DEVELOP MULTIPLICITY OF CONTACTS. IRAN MUST BE AWARE OF THEM AND OF NEED TO PRESENT RIGHT IMAGE ON ITS OWN. ITS POSITION ON ARMS IS UNDERSTOOD BY THIS EMBASSY, BUT IRAN MUST WORK ON PRESENTING IT MORE CONVINCINGLY AND THOROUGHLY TO OTHER AMERICANS WITH WHOM IRANIANS COME INTO CONTACT. OCCASIONAL PRESS INTERVIEWS GRANTED BY THE SHAH ARE USEFUL, BUT THEY SHOULD BE REINFORCED BY MORE CONTINUING, POSITIVE CONTACTS AT LOWER LEVELS. FOR A RELATED EXAMPLE, FACT IRAN OFTEN DOES NOT VOTE WITH USG ON UN ISSUES HAS DIFFERENT EFFECT ON U.S. -IRAN RELATIONS THAN DO THE OCCASIONS WHEN WEST EUROPEANS DO NOT VOTE WITH U.S. ON UN ISSUES. THE GOI SHOULD BE AWARE OF THESE DIFFERENCES AND STUDY WAYS IN WHICH PUBLIC RELATIONS CAN EXPLAIN THEM TO THE SATISFACTION OF U.S. OR OTHER WESTERN AUDIENCES.

8. HATEF REFERRED TO RECENT CONVERSION CHARGE HAD WITH MFA UNDERSECRETARY NASSIR ASSAR. ASSAR HAD ASKED FOR IDEAS ON WHAT IRANIANS CAN DO TO IMPROVE THEIR IMAGE. CHARGE HAD NOTED USEFULNESS OF GOI, THROUGH ADDITIONAL STAFF AT ITS EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON AND OTHERWISE, TRYING TO AFFECT THE PERCEPTIONS OF IRAN HELD BY MORE JUNIOR CONGRESSMEN AND CONGRESSIONAL STAFFS, AND BY THE U.S. PRESS. RESPECTED IRANIAN ACADEMICIANS SUCH AS DR. CHUBIN MIGHT BE UTILIZED TO EXPLAIN IRAN TO MORE U.S. AUDIENCES. IRAN MIGHT EVEN CONSIDER OPENING ITS PRISON DOORS FOR INSPECTION ON OCCASION. HATEF SAID SUCH SUGGESTIONS ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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WELCOME AND ASKED IF THERE WERE OTHERS. ADCM CONFIRMED HIS OWN SUPPORT FOR THOSE SUGGESTIONS AND ADDED THAT GOI MIGHT PROFIT BY CREATING SOME CENTRAL POINT OF REFERENCE TO COORDINATE HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELATED QUESTIONS, CUTTING ACROSS MINISTERIAL LINES. THUS PRIORITIES MIGHT BE SET AS BETWEEN THE UNDERSTANDABLE NEEDS OF SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE COUNTRY AND NEEDS ARISING FROM PRESENTATION OF IRAN'S IMAGE ABROAD. ADCM AGREED WITH HATEF'S POINT THAT STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS DEALING WITH IRANIAN AFFAIRS COULD USEFULLY WORK WITH THE IRANIAN EMBASSY IN

WASHINGTON TO HELP PRESENT IRAN'S CASE ON THESE COMPLICATED ISSUES TO MIDDLE-LEVEL USG OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THOSE IN THE CONGRESS. HOWEVER, IMPETUS MUST COME FROM GOI, WHICH MUST ORGANIZE ITS EFFORTS WITH THESE AIMS IN MIND.

9. DISCUSSION ENDED ON CONTINUING FRIENDLY NOTE WITH HATEF AND ADCM AGREEING THAT SUCH CONVERSATIONS ARE MOST USEFUL IN ATTACKING THE COMPLICATED PROBLEMS INVOLVED. EMBASSY COMMENT WILL FOLLOW SHORTLY.
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